DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 205 95 UD 015 590

AUTHOR	Condon, E.C.
TITLE	Cultural Conflicts in Values, Assumptions, Opinions. Reference Pamphlets on Intercultural Communication, No.3. Human Relations in Cultural Context, Series C: Teacher Training Materials.
INSTITUTION	Rutgers, The State Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. Graduate School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY	New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Office of Adult Basic Education.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	73
GRANT	OEG-0-72-1442
NOTE	13p.; this document is available only in microfiche due to reproduction restriction by the publisher
AVAILABLE FROM	Rutgers University-G.S.E.,IRES Institute, 10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903 ($1.25, paper)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Acculturation; Adult Educators; American Culture; Anglo Americans; Bias; *Changing Attitudes; Cultural Factors; *Culture Conflict; *Ethnic Groups; Human Relations; Instructional Materials; Spanish Culture; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education; *Values

ABSTRACT

Values tend to become distorted at the intercultural level. What is considered "good" in one society may be criticized as "bad" or "incomprehensible" in another. For example, American culture tends to value time to the point of obsession, whereas Hispanic cultures subordinate temporal considerations to interpersonal relationships. The resulting clash which will occur between representatives of divergent cultures may then be predicted accurately. It should convince teachers, it is argued, of the necessity to adopt a flexible frame of reference and an attitude of suspended judgment in dealing with any crosscultural circumstances. What is needed, is the ability to look at the world through someone else's eyes and to perceive it in the manner determined by the viewer's own cultural filter. Such a skill is simply a matter of acquiring the needed competences in cross cultural understanding. Without this empathy for other cultures, the effectiveness of an adult educator will be considerably reduced, as a result of restrictive communication at the cognitive, as well as the affective and psychomotor levels. The task of the adult educator is not so much that of "changing" the learners' values as that of helping him (1) acquire an additional and different set of values, and (2) learn to behave differentially according to context. (Author/JM)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Excerpt No. 3: Cultural Conflicts in Values, Assumptions, Opinions

E. C. Condon

"The project reported herein was performed pursuant to Grant Number OEG-0-72-1442 from the U. S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare to Montclair State College, and is the result of a contract with Rutgers University for specific services to be performed under said grant in accordance with the New Jersey State Department of Education plan for staff development under the HEW Region II Adult Continuing Education Staff Development Program. The opinions expressed therein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U. S. Office of Education; and no official endorsement by the U. S. Office of Education should be inferred."

ED 015 590

ED117205

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HUMAN RELATIONS IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Series C

Teacher Training Materials

Reference Pamphlets on

Intercultural Communication No. 3

Prepared by:

E. C. Condon, Director
Language Culture Institute
Rutgers Graduate School of Education
New Jersey 1973

HEW Region II
Staff Development Project
Montclair State College
New Jersey

In cooperation with New Jersey
State Department of Education
Division of Field Services
Bureau of Adult Continuing Education
Office of Adult Basic Education

Subcontracted to Rutgers University

THIS MATERIAL MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED
IN ANY FORM WITHOUT THE EXPRESSED
PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT HOLDERS.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
IRES Institute, Rutgers Univ.
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

EXCERPT 3

CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN VALUES, ASSUMPTIONS, OPINIONS

Cultural values represent the beliefs and ways of acting which are held important by a society, and which give a common sense of identity to all of its members. From these values are derived a set of norms, or rules which define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors within the given society, and which provide sanctions for the violation of these norms, and rewards for their observance.

As a rule, values are considered to be more generalized than assumptions (or attitudes) or opinions (or beliefs); they are also more basic and less numerous than the latter. According to Milton Rokeach, the average person holds dozens of values, thousands of attitudes, and tens of thousands of beliefs.[1] What complicates matters is that values, attitudes and beliefs undergo a continuous process of change and tend to vary somewhat from one group or individual to another. The existence of these two factors -- change and variations --, therefore, make it extremely difficult for members of any society to identify, and agree upon, those patterns which may be considered characteristic of their own and other groups. Thus, crosscultural differences in values, attitudes or beliefs often act as sources of conflict between individuals raised in different societies. A knowledge of these differences and how they operate is, therefore, essential to the achievement of effective intercultural communication. And, in terms of the classroom situation, a teacher who deals with adults needs

---

[1]Rokeach, Milton, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Boss, 1969).

to examine his own beliefs, attitudes and values in relation to what he teaches to his students, as well as in relation to the latters' needs, in order to help them adapt to a style of life which varies from that of their own culture. Whatever change he attempts to produce within the learners will have to be carried out in an open manner which leaves them with the freedom to accept or reject the proposed change. The major objective to be accomplished in this respect is to convey to the students the conviction that there are no "right" or "wrong" values, attitudes or beliefs per se, but only appropriate or inappropriate ones, as determined by the situational context. Any individual who accepts and understands the existence of likenesses and differences in thinking, behaving and feeling (as well as in speaking) among the various people of the world can be said to hold the key to intercultural understanding.

Values

There are many definitions of this term available to the layman; in fact, it would seem that each scholar who handles the concept writes his own definition. One of the most popular ones was offered by Rokeach in 1969:

> "A value is a standard or yardstick to guide actions, attitudes, comparisons, evaluations, and justifications of self to others.[1]

Regardless of the choice of definition, the processes and dimensions inherent to values may be readily identified. They entail the processes of selection, valuation and action:

---

[1]Rokeach, Beliefs, Attitudes and Values.

Selection: the individual chooses freely among alternative behaviors, with full cognizance of the consequences of his choice.

Valuation: the individual is content with the selected alternative and is willing to proclaim it.

Action: the individual acts in a manner consistent with his choice.

In terms of dimensions, values may be intrinsic or extrinsic. As a rule, however, most people hold values which are both intrinsic and extrinsic. A student may value learning, for instance, because he is interested in new ideas (intrinsic value), and he may also value the grades he receives for his learning achievement (extrinsic value).

Among the many values each person may be said to possess, some are more important than others; values are, therefore, usually organized into a hierarchical network which is subject to modifications, with the passing of years. All decisions made by an individual are based upon his specific system of values, this system of values may, in turn, have been influenced by those of a particular group (to which he belongs or wants to belong) within his culture.

At the intercultural level, conflicts between two values or sets of values may be expected to occur frequently within newcomers into a community. In adult education classes, it will be the responsibility of the teacher to help such students resolve these conflicts in a rational manner, on the basis of information concerning the American way of life (including choices and predictable outcomes of behaviors).

Values and the Individual

Most experts agree that a relationship exists between the values held by an individual and the goals he sets up for himself. In fact, the two concepts are often held as synonymous to each other. The relationship between them has never really been clearly defined.

Values are also known to determine attitudes, as well as to influence goals in members of a given society. They tend to be revealed in a tangible way by expressed attitudes, beliefs and opinions, or by externalized behaviors. Attitudes, in turn, may be defined as a set of interrelated beliefs, and both may be verbalized through statements of personal opinions. The most dangerous attitude (expressed by opinion) is that of prejudice which results in the judgment of an individual or group of people, thing, or situation, with little or no factual basis. Prejudicial attitudes always affect the newcomer into a host culture detrimentally, for no better reason than the fact that he is an outsider who does not conform to the norms of the group. The danger of prejudice lies mainly in its power to become actualized into outright discrimination against representatives of "out" groups, while being justified in the eyes of the perpetrator in terms of the stereotypes he has acquired for each of these groups. And, of course, such stereotypes are usually negative in nature, as may be illustrated in the following examples:

> "British people are stuffy . . . Italians are noisy . . . Puerto Ricans are unreliable. . . ."

Anyone who holds such beliefs will continue to do so, even in the face of incontrovertible evidence; for values, attitudes,

beliefs, opinions, and the like, belong to the affective as well as the cognitive domain in the make-up of a human being. And, accordingly, they are colored by our emotions.

Attitudes (as well as the beliefs which form them, or the opinions which express them) possess different aspects which may be identified as follows.

1. Direction: toward the positive or the negative side.
2. Intensity: from mild to extreme importance.
3. Depth: greater or lesser certainty about the correctness of the attitude, value, etc.
4. Agreement: the extent to which one set of values, attitudes, etc. agrees with another set.
5. Duration: the length of time a value, attitude, or the like has been held.
6. Range: from very specific to very general.
7. Objectivity: from very objective (based upon accurate information) to prejudiced (not based upon facts).

Although the direction of a person's attitudes is not always directly related to the amount of information he possesses about the subject, there seems to exist a definite relationship between the acquisition of information and attitudinal changes. In other words, studies have shown that factual information provided to teachers does have a positive effect on the reduction of their prejudices and discriminatory practices. This finding is quite encouraging in the realm of education, for it indicates the possibility of training educators to discontinue detrimental teaching practices and to disregard cherished prejudices for the sake of educational effectiveness.

How Values Are Learned and Attitudes Acquired

Each national group may be characterized by a set of dominant values (reflected in attitudes) which are held by the average member of that society. An example of such a value would be the American stress on "achievement." Beyond these common values, there are others which tend to vary in accordance with such variables as geographical location, occupation, social class, educational level, age, sex, religion, and many other factors. An example of these variations would be in the type of achievement valued by an individual -- physical, intellectual, financial, and the like.

All values and attitudes are learned through contact with other people who act as agents in the communication of these beliefs. Such agents are: the family (the most influential in the formation of an individual's life style), friends and neighbors, schools, church and community groups, and social groups. As a rule, both the schools and their teachers tend to stress middle class American values and attitudes which, in the case of culturally different learners, may be in direct opposition with those held in the home. In this respect, adult educators ought to become aware of their own tendencies and of the possible conflicts which their teaching may create within the learners. They also should realize that it would be impossible for them to teach anything without including value or attitudinal content: some values are taught deliberately, and others are communicated by the teacher's action and by the very way he teaches.

Since values and attitudes tend to permeate our whole life, it stands to reason that a conscious knowledge of them

(and their effect on interpersonal communication) will facilitate human interaction in the adult classroom. In addition, the accelerated pace of technological development in this country tends to confront each individual with new problem situations, practically on a daily basis, which cause conflicts within the inner self and with others. Under the circumstances, the ability to analyze the situation and to evaluate its effect upon values and attitudes becomes essential as a means of adapting successfully to changing conditions of the physical and social environments. This same skill is equally basic to the effective handling of language education at the adult level where the learners bring to class a network of life style which is irrelevant to the American way of life, and which may act as a deterrent for them in the search for employment and acceptance into community existence. The task of the adult educator will not be so much that of "changing" the learners' values, as that of helping him acquire a different set of values IN ADDITION TO his own and learn to behave differentially in accordance with these divergent sets within the appropriate context.

Thought Questions for Adult Educators:

American culture tends to value time to the point of obsession. Ask yourself in what manner this value is reflected in the language and the everyday behavior of the average man:

Think of time-oriented expressions, such as: "Time flies," "A stitch in time saves nine," "Time is money," "First come, first served."

Think of the ways in which we organize our lives around the constraints of time: with "time schedules," "penalty clauses" for failure to complete a contract on time, tendency to "get it over with," "rush hours," and the like.

Think of the different meanings attached to "time" and its uses by members of other cultures who attend your classes. the long-range view of time held by many Asiatics (over several generations), the subordination of temporal considerations to interpersonal relationships in Hispanic cultures, or the present-day orientation of some Indian Americans (the Navajos, for instance).

Ask yourself what sort of conflicts are likely to be aroused in the culturally-different individual who discovers in the host society (the U. S. A.), time valuations which clash with those of his native culture. Try to imagine how you would react to the reverse situation, and what sort of actions you would resort to, in order to resolve these conflicts.

In trying to answer these hypothetical questions, it is necessary to learn how to place oneself in the other man's shoes, so to speak. In all value conflict situations, one must remember that there are always two sides to be considered, and that both sides are entirely justifiable in the eyes of their proponents. For the purpose of illustration, two concepts of time will be presented below:

1. <u>The American Viewpoint</u>

   a. An American businessman comments upon the Hispanic way of handling time:

"How can Spanish people be so lackadaisical, as far as punctuality is concerned?
Most of us schedule our work throughout the day and week, in order to reserve time for leisure and for family activities. Time is money, and it should not be wasted. To be late for an appointment or on the job is tantamount to stealing someone else's time, and thus it is unforgivable. Mañana is not good enough for me, nor is it acceptable for any sensible businessman."

b. An American businessman comments upon the Hispanic view of time-obsession in our culture:

"How can Spanish people say we worry too much about the future?
The future is the only thing man is able to control through planning. Neither the past, nor the present can be changed, but tomorrow is still subject to improvement; and any man who rests on his laurels falls immediately behind in the race for progress."

2. The Hispanic Viewpoint

a. A Spanish speaker comments upon the American way of handling time:

"How can Americans stand such an accelerated tempo of activities?
What is the point of rushing through life experiences when it is the quality of human activities that is important, not the quantity nor the size of deeds performed in the course of existence. To scurry around from task to task like an ant is an affront to human dignity."

b. A Spanish speaker comments upon the American view of leisure-time orientation in Hispanic culture:

"How can Americans say that we pay no attention to time?
On the contrary, we pay more attention to time than they do; we use time to fulfill our destiny as human beings, instead of letting ourselves be run by it. We plan such important events as marriage, career, and family life carefully in advance, for they mark the steady progress of a man's existence; but we leave other matters to the spontaneity of momentary feelings and circumstances. How do I know today, whether or not I will enjoy dining with a friend next week, whereas I feel a desire and a need to do so tonight? But I cannot obey this impulse if I have already set the time aside for something else; thus I will have missed an opportunity to use time pleasurably."

On the basis of these two examples, it is easy to see how values (in this case those associated with time) tend to become distorted at the intercultural level, and how what is considered "good" in one society may be criticized as 'bad' or 'incomprehensible' in another. The resulting clash which will occur between representatives of divergent cultures may, then, be predicted accurately. It should convince teachers of the necessity to adopt a flexible frame of reference and an attitude of suspended judgment in dealing with any crosscultural circumstances. Unless he becomes sensitized to the incredible complexity of inter-ethnic patterns in human interaction, the most dedicated educator cannot succeed in analyzing classroom problems clearly and objectively, nor is he able to devise instructional strategies based upon facts inherent to the situation. Empathy is what he needs, that is to say, the ability to look at the world through someone else's eyes and to perceive it in the manner determined by the viewer's own cultural filter. Such a skill is not an innate gift possessed by rare individuals; it is simply a matter of acquiring the needed competences in crosscultural understanding through knowledge (the nature of culture, cultural conflicts and misunderstandings, American and other cultures), experience (in analyzing interaction situations in terms of divergences in values, attitudes, beliefs, and the like), and determination (to keep on trying until the signs of intercultural misunderstandings are readily identified, at least as they occur in the classroom environment). Without this empathy for other cultures, the effectiveness of an adult educator will be considerably reduced, as a result of restrictive communication at the cognitive, as well as the affective, and psychomotor levels.